

The Thirties

characterised by greater earnestness than those which discussed the Sino-Japanese conflict, this must largely be attributed to the fact that the British standpoint was usually explained by Mr. Anthony Eden, who had been appointed Minister for League Affairs, rather than by Sir John Simon. Where Sir John was chilly and judicial, Mr. Eden was ardent and tireless; where Sir John's pursuit was a formula, Mr. Eden's was a resolution.

In Mr. Eden, admirers of the League found their perfect champion. They fixed their hopes on him with an almost pathetic fervour. He was young, he was handsome, he was brilliant and enthusiastic; above all, he believed in the League. Elderly politicians seemed flat and unprofitable beside him; ideals fell coldly from their lips, but from his were full of fire. He embodied in his person, in the delivery and substance of his speeches, what was hoped for the future—a world whose rulers, would look like film-stars, speak like B.B.C. announcers, think like Professor Gilbert Murray; and where passion would be expended in conciliatory words and gestures, never in bloody deeds. Resolved that henceforth no blood shall be shed; any dissentients? no; carried unanimously.

Mr. Eden threw himself into the Italo-Abyssinian conflict almost as energetically as Mussolini. When a decision was taken at Geneva to investigate its origins, he bravely announced that, if necessary, they would trace it back to the Flood—a proposal which, if Mr. Matsuoka had been concerned, might have been readily accepted. No effort would be neglected which offered a hope of a settlement; no pains were excessive

when peace was
the prize. With M. Laval Mr. Eden spent many
hours—a
strangely assorted couple; Sir Galahad and friend,
with, as later
transpired, somewhat different conceptions of the
Holy Grail in
question. Mr. Eden also visited Mussolini,
conveying to him
an offer of a strip of desert in British Somaliland,
along with
the port of Zeila, which might be ceded to
Abyssinia as recom-
pense for concessions to Italy. This offer was
scornfully rejected,
the already prominent Signor Gayda suggesting
that one reason